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The Role of Asymmetrical Federalism in Ethnic-Territorial Conflicts in the Era of Democratization: the RF as a case study

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Introduction

The paper analyses the role of federal institutions in the ethnic-territorial conflict management. For many years, there have been arguments that federalism provides the best possible government for a nation of ethnic and regional disparity. The general idea is that a centralized federal government that protects both national and regional interests is the most responsive administrative form for a state marked with ethnic and territorial diversity. The paper also explores the interconnection between conflict, democratization and the role of federal institutions in conflict mitigation.

The main question is whether there are some kinds of federal arrangements capable of articulating states with complex territorial and ethnic diversity from a perspective of conflict dimension. This is currently one of the most important challenges of federalism. This analytical task is even more

challenging to accomplish if we consider a “democratizing” state – a state in the process of transition from authoritarian or totalitarian regime to democracy. Democratization as a context of ethnic conflicts in a federal state is important for analysis. The relationship between conflict and democratization resembles chicken-egg dilemma. The democracy is about conflict and about consensus. More accurately, democracy is about the process that transforms the former into the latter.

In the theoretical part, I have two hypotheses to test. First, during the time of regime change (i.e., regime transition) the federal institutions are important as long as they are viewed in “dynamic”, or in “procedural”, perspective. Thus, they help to accommodate various demands of ethnical territories and to prevent or manage conflict. Then, it is crucial to take into account the issue of asymmetry of federalism, for symmetric federation is purely theoretical construction and does not exist. Asymmetry, as a result of “federal bargaining” and flexibility of the institutions, is unavoidable especially in the process of regime change accompanied by miscalculation of multi-level reforms and mistakes. A federal system is also supposed to limit the ability of ethnic majority of the regions to impose its will on the ethnic minorities.

The second hypothesis is the counter-argument and states that federalism can be analyzed as Janus-faced. Federalism can perpetuate and intensify the very conflict it is designed to manage. According to this argument, the conflicts are institutionalized in the design of federal system itself. Thus, federalism empowers regional elites to sustain and exacerbate the conflict.

Then, in the second part, the theoretical assumption on the role of federal institutions in the conflict mitigation is tested by empirical observation. In the empirical part I analyze three case-studies – three regions of the Russian Federation (Chechnya, Tatarstan, and Sakha). I select the set of conditions that would help to account for the occurrence of properties specific to particular conflicts. I will focus on a narrow set of models comprising, on the one hand, institutional and, on the other hand, geographical, ethnic, and economic variables.

The paper addresses the complex issue of causation to examine the conjunctures in time and space that produce certain outcomes. By examining differences and similarities in context it is possible to determine how different combinations of conditions have the same causal significance and how similar causal factors can operate in opposite direction.

I. Federalism: Theoretical Analysis

For many years, there have been arguments that federalism provides the best possible government for a nation of ethnic and regional disparity. The general idea is that a centralized federal government that protects both national and regional interests is the most responsive administrative form for a state marked with ethnic and territorial diversity.

Political theories of federalism tend to focus on structures, actors, federal procedures, and processes. One of the most interesting classification of these studies was offered by Anthony Birch (1966:15). He distinguishes four approaches in the scientific literature to this problem:

1. The institutional or constitutional approach (presented by K. C. Wheare and William Maddox);
2. The sociological approach (W. S. Livingston);
3. The process or developmental approach (Carl Friedrich and Karl Deutsch);
4. The political approach (federalism as an exercise in the making of bargains / William Riker).

One of the probable fallacies of this classification is the criteria itself. It is not quite clear on what basis the division between the third and the fourth groups is made. The concepts of both these approaches emphasize the “procedural”, or “dynamic”, aspects of federalism and describe it in terms of bargaining.

Thus, in this paper, I will follow the critical analysis of concepts of federalism according to the slightly different classification which includes three approaches to this political phenomenon:

1. The “static” or “formal” approach (also called “constitutional” approach);
2. The sociological approach;
3. The “dynamic” (or “procedural”, “functional”) approach.

Analyzing approaches group by group will allow to avoid unsystemized description which would be inevitable if the task was only the analysis of the “*history of federalism*” - analysis according to the chronological order of the concepts. It is also more useful and challenging from analytical point of view for it allows broader review of existing theories and concepts classified according to these three approaches. Another remark should be made in the beginning of analysis. I have to specify that the division into “static” and “dynamic” approaches are very much conditional for almost every concept involves both view on federalism as process (“bargain”) and as “form” (as fixed by constitution). Nonetheless, this division proved to be a useful analytical tool to indicate the main emphasis of the concept and demonstrate how the very idea, how the understanding of federalism was developed over time.

The Formal (or Constitutional) Approach

This approach encompasses quite a number of works. Among them can be distinguished such prominent scholars of federalism as Elazar, of K. C. Wheare and William Maddox. Thus, Elazar (1987) describes federalism as a mode of political organization which unites separate polities within an overarching political system so as to allow each to maintain its political integrity. Elazar distinguished a few important characteristics and principles of federal systems:

1. Written constitution should outline the terms by which power is divided, should outline the general government, the polities constituting the federal government;
2. Noncentralization understood as diffusion of power and decentralization as diffusion of specific powers to subordinate local governments (it is a subject to recall by unilateral decision);
3. Areal division of power – internal division of authority and power on an areal basis;
4. Maintaining union – direct lines of communication between the public and both the general and the constituent governments; people should be able to elect representatives to all governments which serve them;
5. Maintaining noncentralization – constitutional polities must be equal in population and wealth (or being balanced in their inequalities); permanence of boundaries of the CUs; substantial influence of CUs over the (in)formal amending process;
6. Maintaining the federal principle: both CUs and the nation has set of institutions with (a) the right to change them unilaterally, (b) separate legislative and administrative institutions are both necessary, (c) the contractual sharing of public responsibilities by all governments in the system, (d) intergovernmental collaboration or informal agreements, (e) different “balances” are to be developed between central government and CUs.

It is important to underline that despite the fact that Elazar’s approach is characterized often as “structural” or “constitutional”, the last three features of federalism he mentions are rather about “process” or “federalizing” than about indication a pure fact of “frozen” act stating the existence of federation.

According to Wheare, federalism is a system of government in which the federal and regional governments are both coordinated and independent (Wheare, 1963:36). A federal system should have sharp division in powers and functions of two coequal sovereign governments. The conditions for successful implementation of the federal principle are:

1. A sense of military insecurity and the consequent need for common defense;
2. A desire to be independent of foreign powers, which makes union a necessity;
3. A hope of economic advantage;
4. The experience of some previous political association;
5. Geographical proximity among states;
6. A similarity of political institutions.

William Maddox (1941) suggests conditions conducive to the minimal tension within a federal state which are very similar to those offered by Wheare:

1. The presence of military insecurity;

2. The presence of economic insecurity;
3. The existence of uniformity among states of size, culture, and political and social development;
4. The existence of unifying spiritual, emotional, or ideological forces;
5. Geographic contiguity among states;
6. The presence of independent sources of political, financial, and military power for the central government.

In other words, both Wheare and Maddox see federalism as a form of governmental arrangement that is the product of only a minimal level of consensus.

This approach can be criticized in many ways. First, not every federation was the result of military insecurity. Then, the geographical proximity among the states is not necessarily to be present to secure the efficiency of federal arrangements. Finally, the sheer vision federalism only in terms of static approach, excluding the whole set of features that characterize its dynamics and focusing only on constitutional act as the only criteria leaves out many of essential features of a federal state. It would be difficult to find many of the conditions outlined by Wheare in Mali Federation, Uganda, Pakistan, or Indonesia.

The Sociological Approach

This approach is presented mainly by work of W. S. Livingston who provided an alternative to the purely institutional approach. He explains federalism as congruence between a set of federal institutions and a pattern of societal diversity (Livingston 1956:81-95). Livingston argues that the essential characteristics of federalism is not about the polities' division of powers or in the resulting institutional framework, but about society itself. He believes that certain societies are intrinsically federal because they are pluralist and that federalism is simply their practical translation of the relations among the economic, social, political, and cultural forces that exist in these societies.

What is peculiar about this approach is that Livingston was one of the first who brought up the issue of the role of federalism as a means of conflict mitigation which he sees in dependency on how the congruence of governmental structure and underlying consensus is achieved. The crucial factors for lessening the tension between the federal units and central government are social cleavages of an ethnic nature.

This approach can be criticized from a few aspects. First, the defect of this approach is that it is difficult to make any firm generalizations about the members of ethnic group of which the membership is undefined. The question that remains is what particular form of diversity in what specific kind of federation will produce cleavage and what particular form will not.

Second, Livingston can be criticized for his social vision of federalism. Federalism as such is not about society but about institutions. Every time we speak about similar problems and fragmented

but integrated social groups, we can approach it from the point of view of pluralism or consociationalism (plural society with overlapping ethnic/cultural/linguistic groups).

What is important in the theory of Livingston is that he emphasized one of the first the role of federalism in conflict management. However federalism could be called rather the “institutional mechanism of conflict management” when consociationalism is “social mechanism of conflict management”. Consociationalism includes a few aspects. Among the most important are package deal and division of power. The main idea of consociationalism is that each group gets special rights, special treatment and arrangement across the state (e.g., different schools for different ethnic groups). Third, it is appropriate only for so-called “segmented societies”, where there is no clear-cut territorial division among ethnic groups, where exist deep cleavages and diversity of groups and federalism can not be a full solution (for it is dealing with the institutional arrangement for territories, more-less precisely defined regions). For certain societies federalism can not be the whole solution of the existing problems. This is the situation when consociationalism in the form of functional political parties which provide the “proper” politics of central government can be the answer to the “pillarization” problem (the tool – political parties, the result – policy which might include special agreement, contract for groups /not for territories/, subsidiarity, public policy, etc.). Consociationalism was advocated as the only solution for the states with overlapping identities, with deep cleavages when federal system can not provide the whole answer to existing or potential conflict.

In other words, federalism might help to accommodate the territories in conflict. Consociationalism might help to manage overlapping ethnic groups in conflict.

The Procedural (or Functional) Approach

This approach regards federalism as an exercise in the making bargains. The best representative of this approach is William Riker. Riker defines federalism as a political organization in which the activities of government are divided between regional governments and a central government in such a way that each kind of government has some activities on which it makes final decisions. Unlike the representatives of the previous approaches, Riker stipulates only two necessary conditions for federalism: (1) desire of the politicians of central government to expand their territorial control by peaceful means, and (2) willingness of territories to accept the bargain to give up independence for the sake of the union (Riker, 1964:114-115).

William Riker emphasized the role of party system as criteria for “measuring” federalism. The structure of parties parallels the structure of federalism. If parties are fully centralized, so is federalism (e.g., USSR, Yugoslavia, Mexico). When parties are decentralized, then federalism is only “partially centralized”.

This approach regards federalism as an exercise in the making bargains. Its focus is on the dynamics of the division of powers between two levels of powers. Riker believes that the guarantee that the constitutional act grants the two levels of government in terms of their respective areas of autonomy remains subject to the pull of political forces (Riker 1964). The bargain depends on each side receiving more benefits as a member of the federation than it would have outside the federal structure. The benefits include economic and military resources in return as a cost to those diminished degree of autonomy.

Riker accepts Aristotelian distinction between “essence” and “accident”. The “essence” of federalism is (1) the political bargain that creates it and (2) the distribution of power in political parties (which shapes the federal structure). Everything else about federalism is “accident”: (1) the demarcation of areas of competence between central and constituent governments, (2) operation of intergovernmental relations, (3) the division of financial resources.

Riker pays special attention to the dynamics of the division of powers between two levels of powers. Riker believes that the guarantee that the constitutional act grants the two levels of government in terms of their respective areas of autonomy remains subject to the pull of political forces (Riker 1964). The bargain depends on each side receiving more benefits as a member of the federation than it would have outside the federal structure. The benefits include economic and military resources in return as a cost to those diminished degree of autonomy.

In a more detailed manner this vision of federalism was presented in the works of Carl Friedrich and Karl Deutsch. Both Friedrich and Deutsch stressed the importance of communications systems in politics. Friedrich specifically underlines that federalism should not be seen as it is seen in Wheare’s work, as a static system, characterized by a precise and definitive division of power between two levels of government. He states that federalism is “a developmental federalization of a political society”, the mechanism whereby separate political communities agree to negotiate solutions or decisions on common problems (Carl Friedrich 1968:7).

Similarly, Deutsch approaches federalism as the “amalgamated security-community”, which includes uninterrupted internal connections at the social level as well as a vast range of means of communications and transactions (Deutsch 1957). His approach is quite interesting for it tries to combine both Wheare’s institutional insights and the sociological approach of Livingston in interpreting federalism as a political society in which the internal communications system is considered as one of the most important factors. Deutsch bases his analysis on thirty-three cases. He states conditions for conflict preservation rather than for conflict management within a federation. These are:

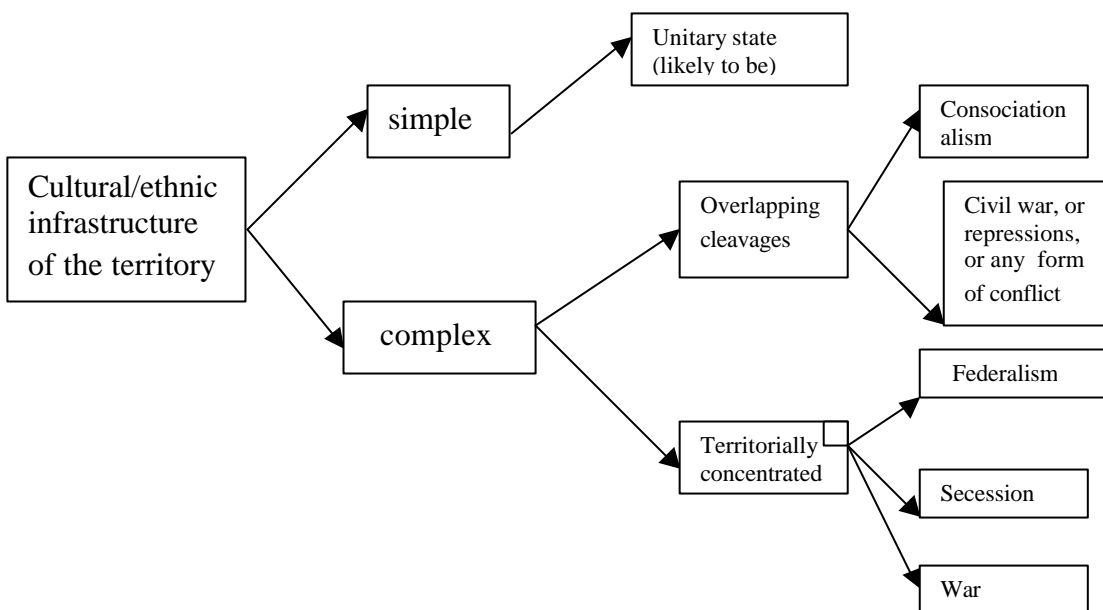
1. A mutual compatibility of primary values shared by the federal partners

2. A distinctive way of life within each constituent unit
3. The presence of popular expectations of stronger economic ties of gains to be made from a federal union
4. A marked increase in political and administrative capabilities of at least some participating units
5. The presence of superior economic growth on the part of at least some participating constituent units directly attributable to federation
6. The presence of unbroken links of social communications, both geographically between territories and sociologically between different strata
7. A broadening of the political elite throughout the federation
8. The mobility of persons, at least among the politically relevant strata
9. A multiplicity of ranges of communications and transactions within the federation (Deutsch 1957)

What makes Deutsch analysis interesting both from theoretical and practical point of view is that he tests these conditions empirically (by analyzing the origin and maintenance of federations known to have existed in the past two hundred years). On the other hand, in his analysis he does not consider such factors as military, diplomatic and political factors as important in the federations.

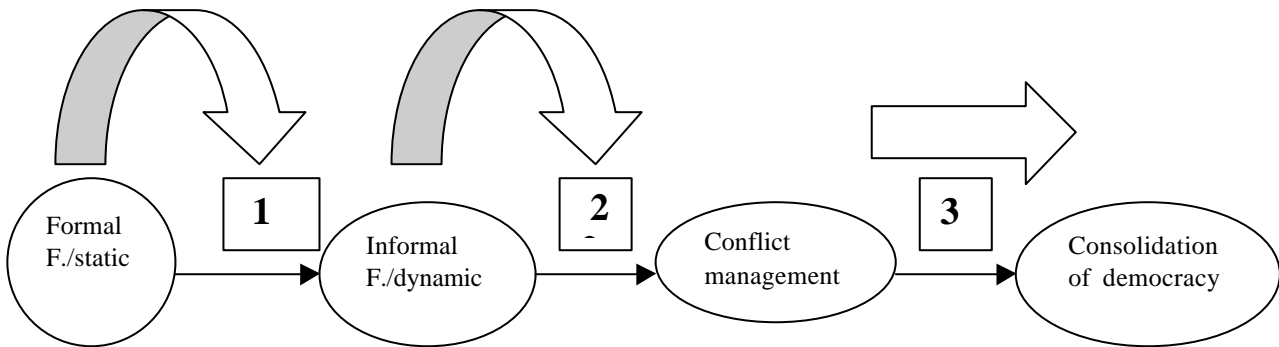
To sum up, we can distinguish three main streams in the literature on federalism – institutional, dynamic, and sociological approaches. If we ask what the connection is between federal arrangement and its “outcome”, we can demonstrate an answer with the help of table:

Table:



Since, “sociological approach” of Livingston we consider inappropriate for the theory of federalism (for we are not going to analyze the concept of consociationalism in the present work), here I shall

leave it out from the diagram 2, and analyze only the two other schools. The following diagram illustrates the possible connection between three phenomena: federalism - conflict management – consolidation of democracy:



1st and 2nd Links: Static (structural/formal) against Dynamic (procedural/informal) aspects of federalism and its impact on ethnic-territorial conflict management.

The diagram demonstrates interconnection between the “formal” (or static), “informal” (or dynamic) federalism and conflict management. First, does not make much sense to separate these approaches in terms of what is the best. Almost each phenomenon of political life can be characterized both from the aspect of its structure and its procedure. So is federalism. But by distinguishing these two aspects of federalism we can grasp the essence of the phenomenon especially when it is to be analyzed in connection with conflict management. For when the “formal” aspect of federalism is created in the form of the constitution, it can not foresee all its consequences, neither can it give in advance the mechanism of conflict resolution for the conflicts might come into play after the creation of Constitution itself. That’s why it is so very important to see the difference of two aspects of federalism and their influence on conflict management. Otherwise we are risking to get into chicken-egg dilemma: what causes what? It maybe considered that federalism causes conflict rather than it resolves or manages the conflict. For if the conflict appeared, or was intensified after the federal constitution had been adopted, it would be natural to come to this kind of conclusion. But conflict may raise from the whole set of different factors and from the “formal” federal arrangements. But it is in fact “informal” – “dynamic” aspect of federalism that might be the most helpful tool for peaceful institutional conflict management within a federal state. From this perspective we can say that Wheare, partly Elazar and some others defined federalism as static phenomenon, when Riker, Friederich were in the beginning of what was later called “procedural” approach to federalism. They saw federalism not only as a constitutional act, as frozen system or organization, but emphasized the role of bargaining process, the role of “federalizing process”, and

characterized federalism in terms of continuous negotiations and searching for balance between the governments of one single state and the balance made at each certain point of time is different if its target to avoid conflict, or to avoid at least conflict intensification, or to manage existing conflict .

Despite the critics of the division of federalism into static and procedural, this approach is useful to understand the very nature of this phenomenon. It allows to grasp the essence of federalism as a combination of two aspects simultaneously. Conditionally I would describe any form of modern federalism as a sum of its' "formal" aspect (or static aspect fixed in the Constitution) and "functional" aspect (bargaining procedure, bilateral and multilateral treaties between the regional governments, regional governments and central government, etc.).

Another argument made in this "procedural" school seems to be plausible. As Friedrich notes, all federal state experience different "waves" of centralization and decentralization over time, waves of concentration and dispersion of power in the central government. For example under the influence of such international factors (e.g., second world war, cold war states tend to become more central. To put otherwise, we can say that "federalization" (procedure) is embodied in federation (form). The Notion of "Federalization" is used here to indicate a dynamic process of finding balance between the center and the CUs at every certain point of time.

The dynamics of federalism – "federalization" - can be checked by the changes in (1) ideology; (2) identity change (in the CUs and/or ethnic groups); (3) financial situation (e.g., changes in taxation policy of the center).

3rd Link: Federalism as a tool of conflict management in relation to Consolidation of Democracy

The relationship between conflict and democratization sometimes reminds chicken-egg dilemma (conflict leads to democracy or democracy to a conflict?). Democratization breeds conflict but at the same time it is aimed to resolve it. In other words, democracy is to transform a conflict into open dispute which is to be managed by democratic means (e.g., elections, etc.).

But there are other types of conflict (apart from regional conflicts) which accompany democracy and especially the transition to democracy. And these are to be left out from this research for the main focus is to be remained on federal structures and federalism as political phenomenon. Thus, democratization of a state is taken as a context which can not and should not be ignored.

Federalism is associated with democracy: democratic state is supposed to be a federal state. But not necessarily. However a federal state is supposed to be a democratic state.

Conceptualization: ethnic-territorial conflict and federalism

Ethnic-Territorial Conflict I employ the term "conflict" in broad sense in line with the description given in the Blakwell Dictionary of Political Science. Conflict is any form of disagreement concerning the ends to be pursued. It involves disputes over issues and interests which may or may

not escalate into violence. Following this approach, the terms “conflict” and “dispute” are synonyms. I also adopt the approach of Ho-Won Jeong in using “conflict resolution”, “conflict management”, and “dispute settlement” interchangeably. I accept the Jeong’s definition of “conflict resolution” as “a process of dealing with conflict” and “dealing with root causes which implies some institutional changes” (Jeong 1999: 413).

The categories of “ethnicity” and of “ethnic conflict” are highly ambiguous (see for example Harff 1994, Mazrui 1990, Midlarsky 1992). The notion of an “ethnic group” is used here to signify a group of people sharing a distinctive and enduring collective identity based on common cultural traits such as language, religion, race, perception of common heritage, linked with the specific territory, shared experiences, and often a common destiny¹.

“Ethnic conflict” is a problematic category. This term causes confusion regarding the categorization of disputes and actors in the conflict because it suggests that the conflict itself derives from ethnicity instead of the actual issues in question. To avoid this misleading implication, following the other scholars, I will use the term of “ethnic-territorial conflict” interchangeably with “regional conflict”². “Ethnic-territorial” conflict includes the issue of ethnicity, but also allows for a wider range of factors to be taken into account (among which ethnicity might not be a central concern). This term is mainly used to describe a *complicated relationship between a region (as a CU³) and a federal government*. Such conflicts are sometimes described as *central-peripheral*, but it is a notion of “ethnic-territorial” conflict that allows for the emphasis of the issue of ethnicity in disputes and the multi-ethnic nature of the whole RF. For example, in using this approach, one is able to take into account not only disputes initiated by ethnic minorities (e.g., Tatars or Chechens) but also the majority ethnic group (in my case – Russians) that happens to be a minority within a particular region but still fight for more independence of this region (as for example is the case of Tatarstan, where those Russians who live in this republic voted for its independence along with Tatars. This case can not be described as an “ethnic” conflict, although the issue of ethnicity was important⁴). This is why the use of the terms “regional conflict” or “ethnic-territorial” seems logical, taking into consideration that the main focus of the analysis is on the intergovernmental relationship (the relations between the central government and the governments of the CUs). As it is specified in the

¹ This approach to “ethnic group” is in no way peculiar. In using this concept, I am following the approach of other scholars who define this term along the same lines. Among them are Henderson, Esman (1992) and Gurr (1993).

² To use “regional conflict”

³ From here on, the abbreviation “CU” will be used to signify “constituent unit”.

⁴ It would be wrong to describe the situation we have in the case of Tatarstan as an ethnic conflict; it is not a conflict between two ethnic groups (Russians and Tatars), but rather between the center and a region. However, even in this case the issue of ethnicity can not be eliminated from conflict study (it was one of the key argument of the Tatars elite in negotiation with the central government).

RF Constitution, all CUs are divided into two main groups – *ethnically* defined *regions* (which include 21 national republic, 10 autonomous okrugs, and 1 autonomous oblast) and *territorially* defined *regions* (6 krais, 49 oblasts, 2 federal cities – Moscow and St. Petersburg with the status of an oblast). This provides another reason for legitimate usage of both the term ‘*ethnic-territorial*’ conflict and ‘*regional*’ disputes.

Federalism I define “federalism” in line with the Simeon’s approach as a “set of institutions – the division of public authority between two or more constitutionally defined orders of government – and a set of ideas which underpin such institutions” (Simeon and Swinton, 1995:3). “Federalism” encompasses the notion of the “federal principle” which is defined by Elazar as “a balance between shared-rule and self-rule” (Elazar 1987:12). I accept the definition of a “federation” given by King: “federation is an institutional arrangement, taking the form of a sovereign state by the fact that its central government incorporates regional units in its decision procedure on some constitutionally entrenched basis” (King 1982:77). Therefore, I will use the term “federation” in a broad sense as a political system in which a territorial division of authority between a general government and several regional governments is constitutionally established. A federal structure is designed to ensure that constituent units within a given state retain at least some measure of independence in the making of public policy.

Although the key features of federation are jurisdiction autonomy of different constituent units and a constitutionally defined separation of powers, one should keep in mind that there is an immense variation in “intergovernmental relations”.

II. Empirical Analysis: the case of the Russian Federation (transition, asymmetry, conflict)

What is the role of federalism in the ethnic-territorial conflict management? To answer this question in respect to Russia we have to take into account (1) that Russia is a “country in regime transition” (so, we have to find the peculiarities of this transition as an environment of existing conflicts); (2) the fact that the RF is highly asymmetrical federation (and asymmetry is a defining characteristic of Russian federalism and presumably caused by the transition); (3) finally, we have to define the contextual variables of the conflict itself, to find out what might influence the conflict or, once it is already in place, the intensity of conflict.

(1) Regime Transition in Russia

Once we think of putting the RF in the theoretical framework of the so-called “regime transition literature”, we have to count the major peculiarity of the transformation of the state which till the certain point determined by its past. The Soviet regime was neither authoritarian nor totalitarian. “The shadow of the past” of the RF regions and republics – being part of the USSR experience –

does matter a lot for undergoing state-building process in the Russian Federation. This factor influenced federalization reforms in the RF (just one of the examples is that many of the RF constituent units were an integral part of the USSR economy and were dependent on the center). Some scholars of federalism state that contemporary territorial-ethnic conflicts in FSU in general and in the RF in particular can be primarily explained as “unfinished business” from nationalist or ethnic conflicts of Soviet time (see for example Hughes 2001:2.)

As far as historical legacies of undergoing conflicts are concerned, their roots can be found even in pre-Soviet time. Soviet period just intensified the fragile balance that had been kept in the country⁵. The Constitution of the RSFSR of 1918 established “a free union of free nations”, joined in federation (Art. 2). This document did not contain any provisions for the resolutions of disputes between federal authority different republics. Article 9 proclaimed that the present Constitution was designed for the transition period only and the state itself was supposed to wither away.

As for the issue of ethnicity in the new-formed federation, it was never emphasized and was actually left out of the Lenin’s federal politics and reforms. Another reason was that many of the territorial autonomies formed during the first years of Soviet rule – Stavropol, Donetsk, Don, Kuban, Tersk, North Caucasus and the Black Sea Republics – never had had an ethnic character even during the Tsarist regime. Moreover, in many regions ethnic mosaic did not correspond to strict boundaries. The census 1897 (the first properly organized census in Russia) had registered 146 languages and dialects in the country. Religion and language, not ethnicity, were regarded the criteria for division people into the groups.

But the Lenin’s politics proclaimed the self-determination only for “formerly oppressed nations” (in Lenin’s words). Thus, it became important to count not the languages or religious affiliation, but ethnic group per se. For this purpose the first Soviet census of 1926 asked citizens to indicate their “nationality”. The census produced amazing result. It stated the existence of over 190 different

⁵The dominant ethnic component of the Russian state was Eastern Slavs, whose culture were to give the rise to the ethnic identities of Russians, Ukrainians and Belorussians. However, from the earliest stages of its formation, the population of Russia also included Finns, Balts, Turkic and other non-Slavic groups. The Volga area and Siberia was added to the state in the 16th century; the Ukraine, West Siberia and a part of the Caucasus – in the 17th century; East Siberia, Caucasus and Central Asia were included by force or treaty in the 18th-19th centuries. By the end of the 19th century, Russia had the size of 22.5 million km and 128.2 million people of population. The Tsarist Russia was divided into *guberniyas* and each of them was administered by a governor appointed by tsar. These administrative divisions were retained for a few years after the revolution. According to the data, in the tsarist Russia ethnic Russians comprised less than half of the population. The multi-ethnicity of Russia had evolved over the course of centuries of territorial expansion (military conquests and the development of new lands carried out by the state – first, in the form of Moscow Principality and later the so-called Russian Centralized State).

The population of periphery was extremely diverse. Siberia and the Far East were inhabited by small unrelated groups of hunters and gatherers, but the same territory was used to form the early states of number of Turkic and Mongolian peoples (Siberian Tatars, Yakuts, Buryats). By the time these regions became incorporated into the Russian Empire, Central Asia and Transcaucasus had had already a long tradition of independent statehood.

identities displaying varying sorts of particularism, from locality to clan affiliation (Tishkov1997:31). This census was considered to be a crucial step in the process of state-formation. Groups that were numbered more than 100,000 members and more were called “nations” and the smaller groups : ‘*narodnost(i)*’. The former had the right to their own statehood in the form of the union or an autonomous republic, while the other were entitled only to a lower national-administrative status.

Thus, in 1918 the Turkestan autonomous republic was set up within the RSFSR. Its borders corresponded to the former Turkestan territory, which was inhabited by numerous ethnic groups with complex tribal structures. The Kirgiz (later called Kazakh) autonomous republic was established within the RSFSR in 1920. The same year, the Khorezmian and Bushkara republics were proclaimed (initially they were recognized as sovereign states, then became part of the RSFSR as autonomous republics). Some autonomies of different levels were formed for Bashkirs, Chuvash, Germans, Komi, Mari, and Mordova. In the North and in Siberia a dozen ethno-territorial units of different levels emerged: the Byryat autonomous *oblast*, the Karel autonomy, the Khanty-Mansi and Nenets national *okrugs*, the Oirat autonomous *oblast*, the Yakut autonomous republic, and others.

A Treaty of Union was adopted in December joining the RSFSR, Ukraine, Belorussia, and the Transcaucasian SFSR. The Constitution⁶ was ratified on 31 January 1924, at the second All-Union Congress of Soviets. The Constitution established the 104 officially recognized nationalities. These units were arranged hierarchically (union republic, autonomous republic, autonomous regions).

Autonomous republics had been previously incorporated in the RSFSR and the soviet republics joined by various separate treaties to the new USSR and enjoyed higher institutional status.

Stalin became famous for his experiments with administrative units and consolidated small guberniyas into larger “oblasts”. However between the mid-1930s and mid-1940, these were split again into smaller units also called “oblasts”.

The new Stalin’s constitution was drafted in 1936. The Constitution registered the state structure as consisting of 11 union republics and 20 autonomous republics. This constitution defined 15 autonomous republics within RSFSR. After this, changes in number of national-territorial units were caused only by annexation of foreign territories (Simon 1991, 147). A 16th republic was added to the RSFSR when the previously independent Tuva People’s republic on the border with Mongolia was incorporated, first as an autonomous oblast in 1944 and later as a republic (Treisman 1999:29). This structure of the RSFSR compounded by oblasts, krajs, and 16 autonomous republics was inherited by Gorbachev by the beginning of period of transformation and reforms.

⁶ The description of the USSR Constitution can be found in English in Kahn, 2002:74-75

By the time of its demise, the USSR included 53 national-state entities: 15 union and 20 autonomous republics, 8 autonomous oblasts, and 10 autonomous okrugs. The territory encompassed 128 ethnic groups, numbering from a few hundred to several million, some densely settled, others widely dispersed.

Another important historical aspect is the current process of transition to democracy. Transition, understood as a period of change and major reforms of the state, offers the opportunity for regions as potential constituent units to bargain and demand more competencies, more power, more autonomy, and sometimes complete independence (as the cases of Tatarstan, Sakha, and Bashkortostan demonstrate).

Gorbachev's reforms created contradictions for the old thinking on nationalities issues. On one hand, modernization and equalization of living conditions required direction of the central government and substantial resources and their redistribution among the regions. On the other hand, Gorbachev's politics for the first time during the Soviet history put forward the economic interests and economic development which led to less central planning and control, more economic decentralization to grant the regions considerable responsibility for their own management, production, and policy.

A new nationality policy was announced in August-September 1989. Its stated goals⁷: renewal of Leninist nationalities policies, rejuvenation of federation and increased rights for national autonomy, human rights, culture and language development. It was focused on the protection of political rights inherent in Soviet citizenship for nationalities. Democratic centralism was to be transformed from the past deviation of "excessive centralism" to a "renewed federation", with "broader rights" for unions republican (SSR) Party branches. However Gorbachev rejected the suggestions to have federalized Communist Party of the Soviet Union⁸

The policies Gorbachev pursued were of *uskorenie* (acceleration), *khozraschet* (cost-accounting) and socialist competition on all levels. Gorbachev promoted the construction of *sotsialisticheskoe pravovoe gosudarstvo*, a socialist rule-of-law state which implied radical restructuring electoral procedures, legislative processes and judicial institutions and referred to the importance of a division of powers in a rule-of-law state and established a constitutional review commission.

By early 1990, two-fifth of the union republics had declared themselves sovereign. In February, Gorbachev announced that it was the time to negotiate a new Union Treaty. But this was too late. The law on secession passed on 3 April 1990. In January 1990 Gorbachev had promised the

⁷ The description of this programme is cited and analyzed in Kahn 2002:85

⁸ Gorbachev, *Nationalities Policy*, 9, 46-47, cited by Kahn, 2002:93.

legislation to explicate the never-used constitutional right to secession (Art. 72). He acknowledged the right to secede.

The law “On the Delimitation of Powers between the USSR and Subjects of the Federation” declared the basic equivalency of rights for SSRs and ASSRs and consolidated the transfer of economic rights under exclusive and concurrent jurisdictions. It also granted the right bilateral treaties within the Union⁹. After his election to the new Soviet presidency, in March 1990, Gorbachev established a federation Council composed of the fifteen union republic presidents/chairmen. This institute had no official structures by which to implement any decisions, but in fact it was a shift of power from Politburo and the Party.

One of the attempt to put these events into the theory of transition can be based on the concept of uncertainty of transition per se. Uncertainty in transition is different from uncertainty in stable regimes. As Valerie Bunce noted, the distinction is that within authoritarian regimes the positions of actors are more or less certain, yet the institutions are ill-defined (or uncertain). In democratic polities, however, the institutions are defined (or certain), while the positions of actors are uncertain or, at least, not defined a priori. During transition period, both these elements of political regimes – actors’ positions and institutions – are uncertain to varying degrees (Bunce, 1993).

The difference in uncertainty is well demonstrated by Terry Lynn Karl and Philippe Schmitter (Karl and Schmitter, 1991) in a four-cell matrix of ideal types of transition, using as variables: 1) types of actors who play a crucial role in the transition process, and 2) their use of strategies during the transition period.

Table: Modes of Transition (and level of uncertainty).

Actors/Strategies	Compromise	Force
Elites	Pact (Low)	Imposition
Masses	Reform (Middle)	Revolution (High)

The main characteristic is uncertain position of actors and the institution-free environment. Therefore, actors are free to fight for domination within the state using all means for power maximization, but not for the creation of democracy. Thus, after the transition by imposition in August 1991, until the violent outcome of uncertainty in October 1993, the struggle for the dominant position between rival actors - Gorbachev and Yeltsin, and then between Yeltsin and Supreme Soviet - is not likely to be evaluated as a “transition to democracy”. So, the officially democratic actors would reject the idea of competitive democracy which would mean the establishment of formal institutions for free and fair political competition.

⁹ Kahn, 2002:93 [Law “On the Delimitation of Powers Between the USSR and Subjects of the Federation”, 26 April 1990, *Vedomosti SND SSSR* (1990), No. 19, item 329)

But what transitology failed to address is the role of state institutions in the management of central-peripheral conflicts and, as a number of scholars argue¹⁰, the role of federalism as a key stabilizing device in multi-ethnic states undergoing democratization. Political regimes that existed in the Russian Republic from the mid-1950s until the late 1980s – both on national and subnational levels – were commonly regarded as authoritarian. There were some difference in relative economic development and ethnic composition of Russia's administrative units, the regional regimes still were similarly configured along the lines of a set of actors and institutions.

In the late 1990s, the varieties of political regimes in Russia demonstrated large-scale diversity in Russian regional politics – regime with some features of democracy in St. Petersburg (Ortung, 1995, McAuley, 1997), authoritarianism in Kalmikiya (Magomedov, 1995, Senatova, 1996), even “warlordism” in Primorskii krai (Kirkow, 1995, 1998) as well as some hybrid regimes in other Russia's regions (Hahn, 1997, Afanas'ev, 1997). The puzzle here is why have once similar administrative units of the Soviet empire develop in such varying directions over the last ten years causing so many conflicts across the country?

There are two approaches for solving this regional “puzzle”. The first approach is “procedural” (Melvill, 1998) or “transitological” (Hughes, 1999). This approach rejects the idea of “objective” preconditions to democracy as well as to other forms of political regimes (Rustow, 1970, Karl and Schmitter, 1991). Alternatively, this approach tends to explain the consequences of political regime change through the analysis of the transition process itself.

The second framework regarded as “structural” (Melvill, 1998) connects causes and consequences of political changes with macro-level variables, such as level of socio-economic development (Lipset, 1960) or with popular values and attitudes (Almond and Verba, 1963) as well as with their social capital (Putnam, 1993). But this approach fail to explain why the regime of pre-industrial Kalmikiya is close to advanced industrial Tatarstan due to a lack of political competitiveness and the domination of informal institutions. It is also hard to explain the emergence of completely different political regimes in the city of Moscow (Brie, 1997) and in the Sverdlovsk Oblast' (Gel'man and Golosov, 1998, Luchterhandt and Rozina, 1999) as both regions exhibit clearly prodemocratic and pro-market orientation in mass voting behavior. As the result , the applicability of these frameworks to Russia's regional politics will remain on the agenda of future discussions and it is not the task of the current study to resolve this puzzle but rather to show the certain dependence of the intensity of conflict on the regime transition of the whole country and on varieties of regime of each particular CU.

¹⁰ See for example, Stepan, 1999.

(2) Asymmetrical Federalism

The aspect which matters in defining the role of federalism in conflict mitigation is the degree of asymmetry among CU. One of the advantages of distinguishing two aspects of federalism – structural and functional – is that it allows to bring up enormously important issue for the theory of federalism, the issue of asymmetry. “Asymmetry” is inseparable from all modern theories of federalism. To start with, there is not a single federation in the world that is considered to be absolutely symmetrical in terms of the rights and statuses of its CUs. The factors that usually foster asymmetrical federalism are strong disparity in size of the regions, density of population, the presence or absence ethnic minorities, socio-economic diversion.

All federal states are the states with more or less asymmetry, with prevalence of different types of asymmetry (ethnic mosaic, social infrastructure, wealth, historical legacies, etc). Asymmetry can be in social infrastructure, in different percentage of ethnic groups living within one CU, economic wealth, size, etc. Consequently, the only way to mitigate the conflict (and to accommodate so different CUs within one state) is to give them different rights at different points of time (from procedural point of view) and, finally, to establish different statuses for them in Constitution (static aspect of federalism). This demonstrates how federalism both in its static and procedural aspects can help in conflict management.

The intensity of conflict partially was dependent on the statuses of CUs. Within the RF with such complicated hierarchy of CUs’ statuses their relationship with the center were and are different. Thus, the highest level of intensity of conflict resulted in session was the conflict between the center and soviet republics, then with less intensity goes the conflict between ethnic republics (Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, Sakha), then low intensity of conflict was noticed between the autonomous oblast and center, and almost no conflict was noticed in the relationship between the center and krajs, okrugs, etc.

What is important and might be crucial to know is *how much* asymmetry should be to keep stability and peace in a state?

There are two kinds of asymmetry in a federal state that might affect the tensions in relationship between the center and CUs. Alfred Stepan considers that asymmetry in federal systems legitimate in two areas: *socioeconomic asymmetry* that affects inter-elite bargaining, and *constitutional asymmetry* that affects the fundamental “rules of the game” in political system (A. Stepan 2000:141-145). Watts points out that there are *constitutional* asymmetry and *political* asymmetry. *Political asymmetry* arises from the cultural, economic, social cleavages. *Constitutional asymmetry* is the one that established by the constitution and it relates to the degree to which powers assigned to regional units by the constitution. Constitutional asymmetry refers to differences in the status or

legislative and executive powers assigned by the constitution to the different regional units. As Watts states, in most federations the formal constitutional distribution of legislative and executive jurisdiction and of financial resources applies asymmetrically to all the full-fledged member states to increase regional autonomy.

Both larger and smaller units can be the source of tensions between the center and the particular CUs. Incentives, whether distributive, structural or both, as a means of conflict-management, in particular the use of power-sharing consociational and multicultural institutional designs, have become a key issue for policy-makers and political scientists¹¹. S. M. Lipset and Watts have argued that one of the important for the tensions and conflicts in the federations was cultural, economic, and social cleavages, instead of “overlapping or cutting across one another and thereby canceling one another out, reinforced one another and so created polarization and conflict among regional groups” (Watts 1977:53-54). In these cases, the federal institutions were unable to perform the dual functions of accommodating minority fears through the promise of adequate provincial autonomy and of encouraging federal cohesion through representative and effective central policy-making. Intransigence then becomes the order of the day and that only a small incident is necessary to spark secession or civil war.

Alan Cagnon underlines that asymmetry diminishes the potentiality of conflict between the constituent units and the central government by reinforcing the country’s democratic system by (e.g., encouraging public participation in the decision-making process, accommodating differences between political communities and buttressing the democratic legitimacy of the federal state). Through the examination of the history of the relations between Quebec and the government of Canada, Cagnon states that opposition of minority rights has led to unstable political situations in several federal settings, and that the call made for asymmetrical federalism by most of Quebecois has not led to a large disaffection for the Rest of Canada. Asymmetry in this case lessens the tensions between this province and the center. The Canadian model with “compartmentalized mode of dividing powers” and a form of intergovernmental relations that consists of diplomatic interactions among executives as if they were international actors seems to decrease significantly the tension between the center and constituent units (but, as some scholars argue, it has not established a stable accommodation) (see for example Richard Simeon and Daniel-Patrick Conway 2001). It provides Quebec with a high degree of autonomy, but “does not offset the integration of Quebecers into a federal system”. Simeon describes this system as “watertight compartments – as distinct from concurrent powers”, “ a recipe for a zero-sum approach to overlapping responsibilities, and a politics of fighting for turf” (Simeon 2001:301). Executive-dominated

¹¹ See for example Hughes 2001a, 2001b.

intergovernmental relations focuses on the strategic goals of premiers and prime ministers, and undercuts “functional cooperation at lower levels”. This model of federalism equips constituent units, particularly Quebec, with the tools and resources to make a move towards secession. In contrast, German model of federalism emphasizes interdependence, partnership, cooperation and consensus. In this model, the two orders of government are much more tightly bound which makes secession very unlikely. But one should take into account that Germany is not a multinational federation.

Diamond and Plattner (1994) argue that “ethnic conflict – particularly ethnopolitical threats to the central state – can often be mediated through a judicious implementation of federalism and constitutional guarantees for the protection of individual collective (minority) rights”. Given the widely varying models of federalism, and the differences in the societal conditions in which federalism may be implemented, it is virtually impossible to make broad generalizations about the effectiveness of federalism in conflict management of multinational societies. The argument against the efficiency of asymmetrical federalism is that asymmetrical arrangement provides resources and institutional levers to nationalist elites and can produce the dynamic of ‘disbuilding’ – the situation when “demands for increased powers can lead to further calls for autonomy, the only logical stopping place for which is secession” (Simeon and Conway 2001:304). That is why it is more important to think about the contextual conditions under which federalism is likely to constitute a stable outcome, and the factors which undermine a previously established settlement (as, for example, in Canada it is important to take into account that the federation existed for 100 years before a serious secessionist challenge arose).

The puzzling fact is that, on one hand, constitutional asymmetry among regional units within a federation complicates the relationship between central government and CUs and makes it more prone to conflict. On the other hand, some federations have found that the only way to accommodate the diversity between the regions is to incorporate asymmetry in the constitutional distribution of powers. In some cases, asymmetry proved to be useful as a transition arrangements accommodating regions at different stages of political development. The RF can be one of the examples for this vision of asymmetrical federalism. The asymmetrical approach to the administrative division of Russia was officially established during the Yeltsin government and was considered the only way to establish stability in the RF and to manage growing tension between the CUs and Moscow.

Russian republican elections of March 1990 returned Yeltsin to Moscow as a deputy in the RSFSR Congress of People’s Deputies and he became a Chairman in May 1990. That was the beginning of

constructed anew highly asymmetrical Russian federalism. On June 12 1990 RSFSR declared a sovereignty¹².

The RSFSR was the seventh of the fifteen union republics (SSRs) to declared sovereignty. All fifteen SSRs became independent separate states (these are RSFSR, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia, Belorussia, Ukraine, Moldova, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, etc.). The next tier in Soviet federal hierarchy was autonomous republics (ASSRs) within Russia. Notably that not a single ASSR adopted the strategy followed by all SSRs.

The explanation of different expectations and strategies between SSRs and ASSRs rested in fact that (1) SSRs were better placed (had more favourable geographic position) to declare sovereignty and later on independence. (2) Another reason is that they were incorporated into the USSR by treaty and a claim to equal status was more easily defended. In contrast, ASSRs were established by unilateral administrative decisions and directives of the RSFSR had supremacy over the limited autonomy of the ASSRs. (3) Union republics had had past history of independence when ASSRs lodged within Russia. ASSRs were unsure what to do and looked to Russia. Most Supreme Soviets chose to watch and wait as declarations in the union republics began in November 1988. (4) Another explanation that might be used here is an ethnic composition. Majority of autonomous republics are artificial constructs. In twelve out of twenty ASSRs, Russians outnumbered the titular nationality. This fact serves to explain the reason why these units did not follow the path of the SSRs and stayed within one single state¹³. The next step was regional elections that provided for regional elites the chance to form their own electoral campaigns. Within seven months of elections, two-thirds of republics declared the sovereignty.

During this process, the general tendency was that the richer republics proclaimed stronger claims to resources and more autonomy in the controlling their own budget while the poorer republics tries to protect the federal subsidies. However the most important demands that were present in all the declarations remained the same: sovereignty to replace subordination, supremacy of local laws over federal, autonomy to control economic decision-making and natural resources, respect for local languages and customs.

The Federation Treaty was signed on 31 March 1992 and became part of the RSFSR Constitution.

¹² The flood of bilateral treaties, agreements between union republics, autonomous republic, and RSFSR weakened the centre exclusive jurisdiction. Among these were the decree "On protection of the Economic Foundation of the Sovereignty of the RSFSR" (asserted sole control over all foreign economic activity, natural and industrial resources, and procedures for privatization), the law "On the Operation of Acts of Organs of the USSR on the Territory of the RSFSR" (granted the Republics supremacy over Union authority) and the law "On Guaranteeing the Economic Basis of Sovereignty of the RSFSR" (expanded the decree of that August in of struggling "500 Days Plan").

¹³ Census data reprinted in *Argumenti I fakti*, March 1991, cited in Kahn 2002:105

The Federation Treaty includes three separate treaties and two protocols: one treaty for national-state formation (i.e. ethnic republics), one for administrative-territorial formations (the six krais, forty-nine oblasts and two cities of Moscow and St. Petersburg – termed “cities of federal significance”) and one for national-territorial formations (the Jewish Autonomous Oblast and ten autonomous okrugs). These treaties formalized the three-rank hierarchy for subjects of the federation and the ethnic administration of territory. The signing of the Treaty was preceded by numerous arrangements and agreements between Moscow and some of the CUs that found the basis for future federal institutions.

Thus, for example the President of Bashkortostan Murtaza Rakhimov claimed that he would never sign the Treaty if the special amendment would not be made giving the special status to Bashkortostan. The result was an Appendix (prilozhenie) to the Federation Treaty exclusively for Bashkortostan. Bashkir legislative and judicial systems were declared independent and property (with some exceptions) placed under republican control. It also acknowledged an independent statehood and the right to attendant foreign relations. One demand that was not satisfied was the control over taxation.

Bashkortostan was the only republic to receive a special appendix to the federation Treaty, but “not the only republic to receive special treatment days before the Treaty was signed” (Kahn 2002:130). Thus, in the beginning of 1992, the president of Sakha (Yakutia), Mikhail Nikolaev, advocated secession from Russia and business relations established with international treaties. But on 23 March 1992 signed an accord with central government that granted it exclusive republican control over 32% of diamonds profits and 20% of all gem-diamonds, plus significant percentage of gold and hard currency receipts. The accord was signed not long before the Federal Treaty. Amazingly four days after the signing the Federal Treaty, Sakha accepted a new constitution that established an exclusive control over all natural resources contradicting, thus, to the federal Treaty¹⁴. Nonetheless, the Federation Treaty was signed and followed by the acceptance of the RF Constitution which incorporated all these asymmetries and contradictions.

If we look back to the theoretical approach to such phenomenon as asymmetrical federalism, we can state that the RF exemplifies the sample of highly asymmetrical federal arrangement. The question the politicians and scientists are now trying to answer is whether this high asymmetry will be followed by state consolidation or by increase in the number and intensity of ethnic-territorial conflicts.

To conclude, the perfect symmetry is impossible. Institutional or constitutional asymmetry implies the existence of special channels between the federal government and the CU. Through these

¹⁴ *Konstitutsiia (Osnovnoi zakon) respubliki Sakha (Iakutia)* (Yakutsk: 1995). Kahn 2002:130

channels the CU is or supposed to be favored with special privileges in contrast to other CUs. As for example Russia's federal structure based on a system of privileges for select "titular" ethnic groups exhibits institutional-constitutional asymmetry. The system is sometimes called *aconstitutional* because of bilateral relations governmental levels which are not constitutionally justified.

(3) Contextual analysis

The set of contextual variables that have influenced the conflicts' intensity within the RF are, first, geopolitical factor; second, ethnical factor; finally, economic situation. The geopolitical factor implies the geographic position of CU within the federation: the size, population, and the existence or absence of external borders. Geopolitical factor should be analyzed in close connection with ethnic-demographic factor (it is especially important to account for percentage of the ethnic groups within the CU). Unlike the other two factors, the geopolitical factor causes the least confusion for it is probably the only factor that can be described as stable over the history of Soviet and Post-Soviet time. The second, ethnical, factor is often considered as one of the crucial for initiation of conflict.

One of the assumptions is that if the ethnic group forms a majority, or at least the dominant element, in a geographically-defined area, then the probability of conflict is high. In other words, the higher the percentage of the ethnic group within one constituent unit (CU), the higher the probability of conflict or the higher the intensity of conflict between this CU and a center. The basic role of implementation of federal institutions in this situation is to give this CU with predominant ethnic group certain priorities, rights, degree of autonomy and, thus, to reveal the tension.

Third assumption is that the issue of resources plays an important role in the demands of CU for greater independence, thus, influencing the intensity of the conflict. Resources can be further subdivided into a few issues: financial politics of the central government (fiscal policy), level of economic development of the region by the beginning of transition (defined by inherited from Soviet time factories, plants, infrastructure), existence (or absence) of natural resources (oil, natural gas, diamonds, gold, etc.). The basic correlation is the wealthier CU is, the more demands for autonomy is has to the center, the higher the intensity of conflict.

1. Geopolitical Conditions

By "geopolitical factor" I mean the geographic location of constituent units, its size, and population. Eleven out of 32 units border another state. These are the Karelian, Altaian, Tyvinian, and Buriatian republics, the republics of northern Caucasus (with the exception of Adygeya), and the Jewish autonomous oblast. The republic of Sakha and five autonomous oblasts – Nenets, Yamalo—Newest, Taimyr, Chukchi, and Koryak – are situated along the shores of the Arctic Ocean and the

Bering Sea. Although they are situated along the sea-shore, climate conditions deny access by ship for most of the year and reduces the significance of these coasts.

The ethnically defined units that border foreign states are in general quite small (both in area and population). Altogether these ten units account for only 10% of the area under ethnic-territorial administration and their share of the population is about 30%¹⁵. The most populous republics - Tatarstan and Bashkortostan – do not have external borders and are cut off from other states by a belt of oblasts and kraia with an overwhelming Russian population.

2. Ethno-demographic factors

The position of the titular nation in many CUs is quite weak compared with the other national groups in these areas. The ethnic groups are highly dispersed across the territory of the RF because of immigration policy of tsarist time (especially under the rule of Ekaterina II) and during the Soviet time (notably during the Stalin's period). Now one can be amazed finding out that only 2% of Jews out of all Jews in the RF live in territorially defined CU called "Jewish autonomous oblast". The highest percentage of ethnic group living within their own CU is Tatars. But even here only 48.9% of the population of Tatarstan are Tatars, when the absolute majority are composed of Russians, Ukrainians, Moldovians, mosaic of Caucasian ethnic groups, etc.

According to the 1989 census¹⁶, the titular nation made up less than half of the population in fourteen of the administrative units that today are RF republics. In Kabardino-Balkaria and Dagestan, a majority exists only if two or more titular groups are added together. It leaves only four republics in which a singular titular nation forms majority of the population – Chuvashia, Tyva, North Ossetia and Checheno-Ingushetia.

In autonomous oblasts and autonomous okrugs (which have a lesser degree of autonomy than the republics), the presence of members of the titular nation is even less. Thus, for example, in the Khanti-Mansi autonomous okrug the two titular groups together made up no more than 1.4% of the total population of this CU. In general, the share of the titular nations in these units is quite low (Henz, 1991:26-27)¹⁷.

As a result of Russian and Soviet migration policy, ethnic Russian formed a majority in nine of today's 21 republics, as well as in 9 of the 11 units with a lower degree of ethnic autonomy. This predominance of Russians is a constraint on potential ethnic separatism. The ethnically defined units have heterogeneous populations.

¹⁵ Their higher share of the population caused by the fact that all the autonomous okrugs, with their sparse population, belong to their ethnic enclaves.

¹⁶ Census 1989 of the RF (ethnic composition of the RF Population) is published in Henz 1991:26-27

¹⁷ The Komi-Permiak autonomous okrug and the two Buryat-inhabited okrugs where the share of the titular nation did not surpass 17% might be considered an exception.

Most of the nationalities that have been granted autonomy are quite small in size. Within the borders of the republics the size of the titular nation ranges from 1.8 million Tatars to less than 63,000 Khakassians (Natsional'nyi sostav naseleniya SSSR 1991: 34-48). On average, the titular nation accounts for approximately 450,000 inhabitants in the republics, and 25,000 in the other ethnically defined units¹⁸.

Another complicating factor in realizing demands for self-determination is the lack of consistency between the borders of the territory actually inhabited by the minority and their autonomous units. In many cases the ethnically defined units include only a small part of the minority in question. The largest minority groups with their own territorial units, more than 1/3 of the group lives outside of the autonomous area (e.g., of all Tatars who live in the RF, 68% live outside Tatarstan, among Chuvashs - 49%, Bashkirs – 36%, and Mordvins – 71%). The most striking example are the Jews, 98% of whom live outside their autonomous oblast. It would be extraordinary to claim the independence of a federal unit in which titular ethnic group constitutes just few percent and which is actually predominantly inhabited by other ethnic groups. Thus, the numerically weak position of the titular nations combined with the large number of Russians living in the ethnically defined areas makes separatist movements based on ethnic exclusivity a non-viable option¹⁹.

Another important point that is to be made in connection with ethnic factor is the role of self-perception, the existence/absence of interethnic hostility, and existence/absence of ethnic discrimination. The survey done by the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology in three Russian republics revealed the following data²⁰:

Table 1: Perceptions of Ethnic Discrimination in Republics (%)

Q: Have you Experienced violation Of your rights because of your nationality?	Tatarstan		North Ossetia		Yakutia	
	Tatars	Russians	Ossets	Russians	Yakut	Russian
Yes, often	3.5	1.7	3.2	4.6	5.3	4.6
Yes, sometimes	18.0	16.9	8.8	25.2	32.4	21.9
No, not at all	68.8	77.2	83.2	61.9	50.7	63.3
No answer	9.7	4.2	4.8	8.3	11.6	10.2

¹⁸ Even these numbers can be considered to certain degree exaggeration because account for the total share of a titular groups in each unit, which sometimes include **two or more nationalities**. The smallest of the ethnic groups with its own administrative-territorial unit is the Evenks (it has 3,500 persons within the borders of this entity).

¹⁹ This the main reason why the conflicts analyzed in this study would be better define as “central-peripheral” or “regional” conflicts than “ethnic” ones.

²⁰ This survey was conducted by Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of the RF, March-August 1994 unde the research project “National Consciousness, Nationalism, and Conflict Resolution in the Russian Federation”, cited in Tishkov 1997.

The data demonstrates an extremely low percent of the population said they had “often” experienced violations of their rights because of ethnic affiliation: 3.5% of the Tatars, 3.2% of the Ossets, and 5.3% of the Yakuts; and among local Russians, 1.7 in Tatarstan, 4.6% in North Ossetia, and 4.6% in Yakutia. Answering “no, not at all” were 68.8% of the Tatars, 83.2% of the Ossets, and 50.7% of the Yakuts. Among local Russian the percentage answering likewise was higher in Tatarstan (77.2%) and Yakutia (63.3%) and lower in North Ossetia (61.9%).

Another survey is helpful to demonstrates the level of hostility, if it takes place, between ethnic groups which is utterly important for any “ethnic” conflict. The survey was conducted in the same republics and it posed a question of whether people are willing to accept a person of another nationality as a social partner.

Table 2: Ethnic Attitudes in Republics of Russia (%)

Q: Are you willing to Accept a person of Another nationality as	Tatarstan		North Ossetia		Yakutia	
	Tatars	Russians	Ossets	Russians	Yakut	Russian
Citizen of your Republic	77.0	83.7	90.4	93.3	68.7	71.4
Partner in common Enterprise	61.0	74.1	68.8	65.4	57.5	53.8
Your boss	46.0	59.0	41.3	57.1	30.4	39.0
Neighbor	68.7	80.2	80.5	85.8	61.9	64.7
Friend in common Leisure and Entertainment	56.4	71.1	52.8	59.5	43.1	50.6
Mother/Father of Your children	31.8	54.3	29.6	45.8	29.5	45.7
Spouse	25.7	47.7	23.5	39.7	21.5	30.6
Other	7.0	10.5	2.1	13.1	3.8	4.3

The overwhelming majority of respondents (from 70% to 90%) of titular and Russian nationalities were ready to accept “others” as citizens of their republic (the lowest figure was 68.7% for Yakuts). It is interesting to note that “Muslim” Tatars expressed a more tolerant attitude than the “Christian” Yakuts.

The third table demonstrate the results to the question on the situation of inter-ethnic relations in their republic. The positive answers (“favorable” or “calm”) were given in most cases in Tatarstan and Yakutia (75-80%). North Ossetia demonstrates a different patters as the reaction to violent open conflict between Ossetian and the Ingush that had taken place in 1992.

Table 3: Estimates of Inter-ethnic Relations in Republics (%)

Q.: How do you Estimate Relations in your republic?	Tatarstan		North Ossetia		Yakutia	
	Tatar	Russian	Osset	Russian	Yakut	Russian
Favorable	15.1	11.0	6.4	4.8	9.5	5.2
Calm	65.4	62.0	7.2	8.1	66.9	57.3
Tense	7.6	15.1	68.8	67.8	10.6	26.1
Critical, explosive	0.5	0.3	15.2	13.8	1.2	0.9
No answer	11.4	11.6	2.4	6.0	11.8	10.5

This data allows to reject the thesis about “dividedness” of the peoples in the RF and about hostility among them that might be one of the causes of conflict.

3.Economic factors These factors can be described in terms of economic dependence rather than interdependence. Many of the ethnically defined units have developed dependence on the center during the Soviet period. The local economies functioned as integrated parts of the Soviet economy. Planning and investment were always carried out along the lines of one particular region for a particular industry, without developing a balanced, self-sufficient economy within the republic or okrug.

The areas of the greatest potential for the development of a more or less independent economy are the Volga-Ural area and northern Siberia with their rich deposits of oil, gas and other natural resources. But these territories are surrounded by other regions of the RF.

On the other hand, those republics which are situated along the borders are dependent on subsidies from the federal budget. The republics of northern Caucasus are among the poorest and least developed CUs. The republics of southern Siberia are also highly dependent on transfers of federal funds²¹. Most of the republics can be defined as “mono-economies” in the sense that they rely on imports from other parts of Federation. Thus, for example, 80% of the goods sold in the republics were imported from former union republics (Burell, 1992:134).

This may explain why initial demands for sovereignty have subsequently been moderated. In most of the cases where geopolitical preconditions for independent statehood exist, economic considerations pull in the opposite direction with traditional reliance on federal funds which increased the ties with the center. Separation would probably mean deteriorating living standards and economic hardship.

As an example, I take three constituent units of the Russian Federation – republics of Sakha, Tatarstan, Bashkortostan. The application of the contextual factors to these constituent units is illustrated by the table:

²¹ The best example of it is the fact that 90% (!) of expenditures in the Tyvanian budget have been covered by federal subsidies (Burell, 1992:134)

	<i>Factors</i>			<i>Outcome</i>
	Geopolitical	Economical	Ethnical	
Sakha	3	2	1	6
Tatarstan	1	2	2	5
Bashkortostan	2	2	1	5

The results for Sakha (4 points), for Tatarstan (3 points), and for Bashkortostan (3 points) show that the higher the degree of points, the higher presumably should be the intensity of conflict

Geopolitical Factor:

0 – describes the situation in which the republics (or any other CUs) are cut off from foreign countries and have no external borders and are relatively small in size;

1 – to this group belong those CUs are, first, have substantial territory (from 40,000 to 70,000 sq km) but landlocked in the center of the federation and surrounded by a belt of other regions (Tatarstan); or, second, those small which are situated along the shores of the Arctic Ocean and the Bering Sea (although they are thus situated along the borders of the Federation, climatic conditions, denying access by ship for most of the year, reduce the significance of the sea coast; most of the goods and people must cross the territory of central Russia to reach these areas). In this group are five autonomous oblasts (Nenets, Yamalo-Nenets, Taimyr, Chukchi, and Koryak).

2 - those CUs which have territory bigger territory (from 70,000 to 150,000 sq km) but do not have external borders, and, second, those that have external borders (this group includes the Karelian, Altaian, Tyvinian, Buriatian republics and all of the republics of northern Caucasus (with the exception of Adygeya) and the Jewish autonomous oblast.

3 – those CUs that are both large in terms of geographical territory (over 150,000 sq. km. and have external borders with other states or situated along the shores (e.g., Sakha with territory 3,103,200 sq. km.).

a) Economic Factor:

0 – very poor CUs: completely dependent on subsidies from the federal government (e.g., Dagestan and most of the Caucasus republics);

1 – those CUs that either have some natural resources or developed industry (but still dependent on the center because their local economies functioned as integrated parts of the Soviet economy, where planning and investment were carried out largely without regard for developing a balanced economy within the CUs);

2 – those CUs that have both some natural resources and developed industry, are economically self-sufficient and do not dependent on central subsidies (these are the Volga-Ural area and northern

Siberia – Sakha - with rich deposits of oil, gas and other natural resources, namely, in Sakha, diamonds and gold).

3 – both rich in natural resources and absolutely self-sufficient (because of redistributive centralized economy of Soviet time which aimed at creation codependence among the regions, this type can hardly be found within the RF).

b) Ethnic Factor

0 – insignificant percentage of the representatives of the titular nation live within the CU (the smallest are Khanty-Mansi - 1.4%²², Jewish – 4.2%, Yamalo-Nenets – 4.2%);

1 – significant²³ percentage of the representatives of the titular nation live within the CU (Bashkrostan – 21.9%, Adygeya – 22.1%, Sakha – 33.4 %, Tatarstan – 48.5%);

2 – majority of the population of the CU is constituted by members of the titular nation (e. g., Tatarstan, Chuvashia, Tyva, North Ossetia).

3 – ethnic group constitutes an absolute majority of the population (Checheno-Ingushetia)²⁴.

The table and indexes allows the following preliminary conclusions regarding the connection between the three contextual conditions and conflict. First, the numerically weak position of the titular nations combined with the large number of Russians living in the ethnically defined areas makes nationalism based on ethnic exclusivity a less viable option because of its limited potential for success. This explains in part why local leaders in many cases hesitated to play the ethnic card. This is not to say that ethnic issue is of no importance. The ethnic card is rarely absent in intergovernmental bargaining. But it is rarely the real reason for demands of greater autonomy, the reason of conflict itself.

Second, it can be seen from this brief review that, paradoxically, in most of the cases where the geopolitical preconditions for independent statehood exist, economic considerations pull in the opposite direction with traditional reliance on federal subsidies increasing the strength of ties with the center.

There are a number of variables that are relevant only in certain situations (for example, political parties in the center and regions, the nature of the elite in central government and CUs). However, these factors are relevant only in a few cases. Unlike independent (federal institutions) and “contextual” variables (economic, ethnic, and geopolitical conditions) that are relevant for all three case studies (and for understanding the relationship of Moscow with any other CU), these did not influence directly, or did not make any difference at all, to the cases under analysis. Thus, I

²² For two titular groups – Khanti and Mansi

²³ Significant percentage is considered to be if the titular nation constitutes from 20% - 50% of the CU's population.

²⁴ In two other areas, Kabardino-Balkaria and Dagestan, a majority exists only if two or more titular groups are added together. There are 57.8% Chechens in Chechnya – the only region where the titular nation constitutes absolute majority.

approach these variables as “intervening” at certain moments of time. An example of such “intervening” variables can be political parties. As a transitional country, Russia has a great number of political parties, whose positions, names, and orientation change over time depending on pre-electoral coalitions. For this reason, it is impossible to consider it as a consistent factor which has made any difference to the conflicts.

What the analysis of contextual variables can explain? First, it demonstrates the differences between CUs of the federation. Even the CUs of the same status – all of them are republics – are marked with significant differences (not to speak about a set of CU of different statuses which is left out of this analysis). The overview of contextual variables explains the asymmetrical federal arrangement. Second, it allows to check whether these factors may explain the intensity of conflict itself. Third, we can see how different federal arrangements helped to reconcile the differences and mitigate conflict relationship. The analysis of each of the three republics is divided into three parts: first, the data on contextual variables; second, the analysis of federal arrangements and asymmetry of the situation of CU; third, how it is reflected on the regime change within the analyzed CU²⁵.

Bashkortostan

I. Contextual Variables

Geopolitical factor: The republic of Bashkortostan is the most densely populated regions of the RF (according to census 1989, its population is 3,943,133 people). Its area is 143,600 sq km. But the republic is landlocked in Central Russia bordering Tatarstan and Udmurt and surrounded by other Russian regions.

Ethnic factor: There are 22% Bashkirs that live in the territory of the republic, 39% of Russians, and 28% Tatars (the data of the 1989 census). Thus, Bashkirs constitute only the third largest ethnic group in the region. The other ethnic groups are Chuvash (3.0%), Mari (2.7%), small percentage of Mordovans and Udmurts, with other ethnic groups constituting 5 %.

Economic factor: The republic is rich in oil resources and inherited from Soviet time well-developed oil-processing industry. As far as fiscal policy is concerned, Bashkortostan has always been among “donors” and one of the main contributors to the system of regional redistribution.

II. Federal arrangement and Asymmetry

Bashkortostan, as many other CUs, claimed “sovereignty”. But the terminology of Post-Soviet federalism is very confusing. Thus, by “sovereignty” is meant not an independent statehood but

²⁵ The limits of the paper allows only for a very short observation of the regime changes that took place in the regions. The main focus is to be remained on the federal institutions per se and central-peripheral conflict.

political and economic autonomy. The republic also pursued federal non-interference of the central government in internal affairs and economic self-determination.

The Declaration of Sovereignty of Bashkortostan was adopted (by its Supreme Soviet) on 11 October 1990. It announced “state sovereignty of Bashkortostan on its whole territory in the existing borders”. The Declaration includes three sections. First, “sovereignty” with a focus on economic self-determination; second, the ethnic component of self-determination of Bashkir nation; third, some references to human rights, the rule of law, democracy and the division of power.

In March 1992, Bashkortostan signed the Federation Treaty (but it did so only after the central government accepted an “attachment” to the Treaty that laid down the conditions on what Bashkortostan accepts the Treaty, specifying its special position within the federation and promising some privileges and amendments to be made in future). The attachment mentions Bashkortostan claim over control of the economic resources of the republic, tax sovereignty and judicial independence from Moscow.

The RF Constitution 1993 demonstrates different approach to the federal view of the country that it is stated in the Constitution of Bashkortostan. The Russian Constitution establishes a model of a “moderately asymmetric constitutional federalism with contractual elements” (Gravingholt 188). By contrast, the constitution of Bashkortostan underlines “the idea of voluntary and theoretically reversible integration based on contracts and recognizing the constituent parts’ statehood”. But in the main part, the Bashkir constitution refers only to the agreements that had been already achieved between Moscow and Ufa.

The federal government and the republic concluded a bilateral power-sharing treaty in August 1994. This treaty was accompanied by ten inter-governmental agreements on such issues as economic cooperation, agro-industry, international (economic) relations, state property, fuel and energy, customs, military-industrial complex and others²⁶. After the treaty was signed, Bashkortostan resumed paying taxes to federal government.

The concessions the federal government made in its relations with Bashkortostan were **much bigger and more significant than with all other CUs** of the federation. Bashkortostan can, thus, exemplify the extreme case of asymmetrical federal arrangement within the state. Contextual factors that determined the proper choice of federal institutions to manage the conflict relationship were the huge size of densely populated republic, oil resources and petrochemical industry. Ethnic component did not play significant role and no ethnic hostility is registered within the region.

III. Result of implementation of asymmetrical federalism for democracy

²⁶ This treaty, as many other similar agreements of this epoch, was full of undefined crucial for the federation words such as “sovereignty”, “international relations”, “statehood”, allowing each side to interpret them according to their own interests and situation.

The implementation of asymmetrical federal institutions allowed to manage the conflict between this CU and the central government and to keep the unity of the federation as a whole.

However, asymmetry within the federation in transition allowed the development of different regimes within one single state. Thus, the transition of Bashkortostan displayed the whole set of features of authoritarian regime. While the central government of Yeltsin granted privileges to the republican government, the republic promised to pursue social stability, political predictability. Local democracy and civil rights were not among the demands the center made to republican leadership and were left on the will of the republican political elite. The further political development of the republic revealed authoritarian properties. Under the rule of President Rakhimov, Bashkir elite in power systematically deprived the opposition of any fair chance to compete for power. The new system is lacking of both horizontal (within the regional institutions) and vertical (center-region) accountability.

In the peculiarities of its regime, Bashkortostan differs from other CUs of the RF just as it differs in the number of privileges and concessions Moscow made in its respect and asymmetrical position within the state. Autonomy of Bashkortostan was used by the republican elite to release themselves from accountability before the central government and to pursue their own interests.

Tatarstan

I. Contextual variables

Geopolitical factor: Tatarstan occupies significant area comparing to other republics, but it is, just as Bashkortostan, landlocked in the heart of the territory of the RF. Its area is 68,000 sq km and population is 3,643,000 people.

Ethnic factor: The percentage of ethnic Tatars is almost half of the population, i.e. 48.0%. The other ethnic groups are Russians (43.0%), Chuvash (4.0%), Mordovans (1.0), Udmurts (1.0%), Others (3.0%). The predominant Sunni Muslims Tatars link their geneology to the Turkic tribes of Volga-Bulgaria and the Golden Horde empire. Their language is a member of the Turkic language group. According to the census of 1989 there were 6,646,000 Tatars living on the territory of the former Soviet Union, with the majority inhabited Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, Chuvash republic, Mordova, Udmurt republic, Crimea, the Middle Volga, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

Economic factor: Tatarstan has substantial resources of oil and extremely well-developed and profitable during the Soviet period machine-industry (KAM-Az).

II. Federal arrangement and Asymmetry

Tatarstan declared its sovereignty in August 30, 1990. On February 21 1992, the parliament of Tatarstan decided to hold the referendum on the status of republic. The referendum took place on

March 21, 1992 (despite the ruling of Russia's Constitutional Court that it was unlawful). The results were: 61.4 % replied "yes", and 37.2% voted "no" (the question was: "Do you agree that Tatarstan is a sovereign state, a subject of international law, building its relations with the RF and other republics on the basis of fair treaties?").

The Constitution of Tatarstan was adopted in November 1992 that proclaimed the independence of the republic, equality of nations, allowed for dual citizenship and two state languages.

Tatarstan was more moderate in its demands for "sovereignty". That is how the President Shaimiev interpreted the issue of sovereignty of its republic: "Tatarstan is a sovereign country, but there is no sovereignty in a pure form. Once it is proclaimed, it is time to start setting limits to it".

Starting from 3 June 1993 (the meeting of the Russian Deputy Prime Minister Sergei Shakhrai and Tatarstan Deputy Prime Minister Vasily Likhachev) the process of concluding and signing numerous bilateral treaties and agreements was started. Among them were for example the agreement on the sale and transportation of oil, refining petroleum products and an agreement on higher education.

III. Result of implementation of asymmetrical federalism for democracy

Tatarstan reveal the similar pattern of the regime development to the one of the Bashkortostan. Initially, in the Constitution of Tatarstan, adopted on 6 November 1992, the democratic values were declared. The Constitution proclaimed the rule of law, separation of power, universal equality of rights, freedom of political activity. The Constitution declared an independence of Parliament (which used to be the Supreme Soviet renamed as The State Council), the executive branch headed by the president with precisely defined functions and powers, etc. However, as soon as republic established its independence from the central government, most of the declared democratic values were formally abolished and other were not implemented.

The President Mintimir Shaimiev enjoys autocratic power. To secure his power, he supported the proposal to remove from the Constitution Article 108 that states that "the same person cannot serve as President of the Republic of Tatarstan for more than two successive terms". President Shaimiev also supported the inclusion in the Constitution uncontested elections (although it contradicts the federal legislation). Such uncontested elections were held for Shaimiev himself (the presidential elections in 1991 and 1996) and for 21 heads of local administrations (the parliamentary elections 1995). The Parliament became the tool of executive branch and the results of the election is 100 percent predictable²⁷.

²⁷The situation was achieved with the help of the previous electoral system. State Council elections are conducted in two types of constituencies: administrative-territorial and territorial. The boundaries of administrative-territorial constituencies coincide with the boundaries of towns and districts where heads of local governments exercise full control (Farukhshin 196)

Sakha-Yakutia Republic

I. Contextual variables

Geopolitical factor: The Sakha (Yakutia) is one of the biggest Russian republics. Its territory is 3,103,200 sq km but quite sparsely populated – 1,094.000 (according to the 1989 census). The republic is situated into the Russian Far East and is of the size of the whole Western Europe.

Ethnic factor: Predominant ethnic group is constituted by Russians (50.0%), then, followed by Yakuts (33.4%), Ukrainians (7.0%), Siberian peoples (2.0%), Tatars (2%), Belorussians (1.0%), and others (4.6%). Russian penetration in the area began in 1600s. Increased contacts over the centuries led to the high degree of assimilation between two ethnic groups. During the Soviet time, the assimilation was even fostered after the discovery of gold mines in the regions. From 1924, the republic witnessed migration of Russians on a large scale. The inter-ethnic relations within the region between Yakuts and Russians might have been characterized on certain point of time as tense. Thus, in the 1970s-1980s the growing awareness of Yakutia's wealth and economic potential led to some hostility towards Russians and mass demonstrations throughout 1980s.

Economic factor: Yakutia may be named the Russian richest regions in terms of natural resources. It produces 98% of Russia's diamonds and much of its gold, as well as coal, timber and other resources. It is the only republic with unrestricted access to the sea. As a northern republic, Sakha has traditional and poor agriculture, live on extractive industry, energy resources, and a transport system geared to the bringing in of supplies and the export of raw materials.

II. Federal arrangement and Asymmetry

In the autumn of 1990 the Yakut Supreme Soviet upgraded the status of Yakutia to that of a full republic²⁸ and renamed it Sakha-Yakutia. The main demands of the republic were control of its natural resources and self-determination of economy.

The republican constitution proclaimed exclusive ownership of land, minerals and other resources. Unlike Bashkortostan and Tatarstan, the Sakha republic approved the Federation Treaty of the RF and signed together with the representatives of other republics. However it was reached by previously made asymmetrical arrangement between the republic and Moscow by approving the treaty on division between the responsibilities and duties of the republic and the RF.

As in the cases of Tatarstan and Bashkortostan, the constitution of Sakha-Yakutia contradicted on many issues to the RF Constitution and to the signed by the republic Federation Treaty itself implying the necessity in making further amendments in federal arrangement of the country and further concessions of the central government. Thus, the republican constitution proclaimed

²⁸ Before it was established by Bolshevik regime only as an autonomous in 1924 – the Yakut Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic

ascendancy for local over federal laws, as for example in the declaration of sovereignty and the introduction of Yakut citizenship.

While Sakha demonstrated its willingness to stay as a part of the RF, at the same time it claimed its right to control unilaterally the natural resources.

Concessions from central government have resulted in Sakha being able to retain 11.5% of its gold and 20% of its diamonds.

III. Result of implementation of asymmetrical federalism for democracy

Sakha-Yakutia got enough privileges and concessions from the federal government despite the fact that, as we can see from the survey, inter-ethnic relations in the regions are slightly more tense than in the other two republics (which demonstrates the fact that inter-ethnic factor does not influence significantly the degree of asymmetry of the CU and the intensity of conflict itself). As for local regime change within the republic, it displays less tendency towards authoritarianism than the previous two cases (where regime can be firmly described as authoritarianism). But still the politics of the regional government can be described as “Soviet economy”. In spring of 1994 the economy of Sakha was in crises and the response was to urge strengthening state control: a return to the “socialist methods of production” whereby 80% of the profit was extracted from the producer by the republican officials. None of such preconditions for a market economy as a free labour and capital market, legal regulations exist.

Conclusion

The puzzle that comes out of this observation and is not still resolved: Does the analysis mean that the less privileges - and, thus, the less asymmetry - the CUs gets in a country experiencing a regime change, the more chances to have democratization in this CUs (given that federal government is democracy oriented itself)? Then, what is the way to accomplish the diversion between CUs and how much freedom can be granted to the local governments not to damage the fragile nascent democratic institutions and prevent the local elite from authorizing power in the regions?

The second point to be made is that the contextual variables help to demonstrate the differences among the CUs of the RF on three parameters: geopolitical, economical and ethnical. They do have an impact on center-peripheral relations. But, as the indexes show, they do not determine the intensity of conflict, the scope of the demands (if we compare these three republics among themselves). In other words, it is a *conflict per se*, not the *intensity* of conflict, that is determined by contextual factors. The size, population, existence of external borders, natural resources, ethnic factor do stimulate CU to bargain for more independence. But once negotiation started and asymmetrical arrangement within the federation becomes mutually acceptable, the intensity of

conflict changes not only according to the contextual variables. It is influenced by possible fiscal arrangements, by nature of elite, and even by interpersonal relations with the head of the country²⁹. Had the conflict been dependent on the its “context” only, then the table would display the opposite order: the conflict Sakha-Moscow would be the most intensive one, then, it would be followed by Tatarstan and Bashkortostan. In reality the rank was the opposite. The relationship between Bashkortostan and Federal government were the most tense and the republic got the most of the concessions during this period of time, Tatarstan occupied just a bit more moderate position. Finally, Sakha, although pursuing “sovereignty”, never posed the question of absolute independence (though its size and external borders could make this demand justifiable).

Although the question on interrelation between federalism and democratization remains, we can conclude the following. First, one of the factors that explains why the federal structure is one of the most popular vehicles for conflict management especially in a country in transition is that it can ensure the right of minorities that had been suppressed by totalitarian, authoritarian or any other form of undemocratic regime. Federalism can accomplish these goals because it provides for two or more overlapping jurisdictions, each with substantial autonomy but each subject to an enforceable system of constitutional law. Power can be decentralized to various forms of local government, but if the relationship with the national government is strong, it will keep the country and prevent secession. By contrast, a unitary system is less effective in this sense. Its structure consists of one jurisdiction in which a majoritarian will can dominate the polity. Federalism allows more avenues for policy articulation, more institutional remedies for problems, fewer overall demands, and thus less chance for so-called ‘open’ (or violent) conflict. On the other hand, one cannot deny that the federal system is more complex and less efficient as far as the policy implementation of the central government is concerned, and it is a subject to higher levels of conflict and regional competition.

Second, the federal institutions alone do not guarantee success in conflict management. The federal principle is itself partially influenced by ethnic, economic, and geopolitical factors and need to be reinforced by other factors both societal and institutional.

To sum up, the federalism is not the only factor that influences conflict mitigation in the state. The effects of federalism depend greatly on the institutional structure and contextual conditions. Although federalism does not guarantee absolute conflict resolution, it is hard to find any other form of successful accommodation of multinational state (or so-called “divided society”) that does not involve federal principle. As Linz states it, “federalism, rather than self-determination or independence, is a more constructive, less conflictual, and often more democratic, although it will

²⁹ This statement is applied only to the RF and is one of the properties of regime transition of this particular country, thus, can not be extrapolated to other countries in transition. Such factors as the nature of elite and analysis of fiscal policy and fiscal arrangements are the subject of a separate research.

never fully eliminate the tensions in multi-national societies” (Linz, 1997:15). Federalism does not prevent or eliminate conflicts, but it does make them more manageable.

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